1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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FOLK LIFE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE VILLAGE

Notions connected with life and death are, on the whole, mixed up with religion. To die on holy days, such as Fridays or in the month of Ramadan, is a sign of God's blessing.

Sanctity shows itself also in status and rank and their role in the community. According to the villagers, the 'ashraf' (people of distinguished descent being related to the Prophet) have a better chance of salvation than others, a notion which, of course, satisfies the villagers' ego as they consider themselves descendants of the Prophet. The persistence of the religious prerogatives of the 'ashraf' goes to show that the central conception of Islam in the equality of all believers has not entirely supplanted the Arab reverence for distinguished genealogy.

The villagers' attitude of respect for religious men is based on two principles. The first is that of knowledge of Koranic studies, combined with observation of religious duties; the second is derived from hereditary piety, as recognized piety is believed to be handed from father to son. The example of the two pious men acknowledged and venerated as such by the villagers is perhaps the best illustration. One of these two pious sheikhs is the son of the villagers' deceased saint around whose shrine the tombs of the villagers' cemetery is spread. As this sheikh does not live in the village, he frequently comes to it either for an ordinary visit, for taking part in settling serious disputes between individuals or families, or to collect his annual custom of crops offered to him by the villagers during harvest time. During his stay he moves from one guest house to another as the guest of a clan or a family which endeavours to provide hospitality for him and thus win his approval. In return, the sheikh is requested to write charms, or to bless water, or to read over a sick person, and thus secure his 'baraka'.[1]

The piety of the other religious man is based also on the fact that he is the grandson of a man who was one of the favourite disciples of the chief founder of the Nakshbadia mystic sect. His grandfather is reputed to have done miraculous deeds and had composed mystic verses usually recited amongst the members of the sect. His piety is also based on the grounds that he studied at al-Azhar Mosque and thus he is considered to be well versed in Koranic studies. It was because of his piety that he gained most of the votes in Silwa, when he stood as a candidate for the Parliament as mentioned earlier.

It is also recognized that people who know the sacred book by heart should be venerated as the carriers of knowledge, and many people regard them as possessed of 'baraka'. In Arab councils, religious men are always included, and their decisions are usually respected.

Moreover, the main events of life and death have their religious significance or at least their sanction. It is in the Prophet's tradition to celebrate the naming ceremony, to circumcise children, and to get them married.

[1] This sheikh died during my field work and a delegation from the village went to his village in condolence.

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It is not without significance that in ceremonies of circumcision and marriage, the boy and the man have to visit the mosque in a ceremonial way where dates and food are distributed. In praise of marriage, a villager would quote the Prophet's saying, 'He who marries has perfected half his religious requirements, and he has only to fear God in the other half'. It is also worth stating that the majority of the personal names of both sexes have some religious meaning or are the names of some religious personalities.

The importance of sacredness not only permeates those levels, justifying acts and deeds, but also reaches the substance of living, namely, foodstuffs and bread, usually referred to as the 'sustenance of Islam' and which are considered to be sacred. A good harvest is a sign of God's approval; a torrent of rain which destroys the villagers' crops is a sign of His disapproval. To impart holiness to the land before sowing, or to the harvest before threshing, a sacrifice of an animal and the partaking of a communal meal are desirable acts. According to the enlightened religious view, the villagers do not distinguish between pagan and the proper Islamic concepts. The village schoolmaster said that the belief in the power of saints, sorcery, and magic, and the appeal to divination and ritual for healing the sick as practised in the village, are complexly interwoven with Islamic beliefs, but they are not in fact a part of the pure Faith.[1] It is believed that sickness might be inflicted by a saint for not fulfilling a vow taken in his name, or for not offering him his due customary gift and sacrifice. A great deal of treatment of disease and of acquiring of good luck could be achieved by prayers, sacred charms, and propitiation of saints. The strength of the religious force could be also ascertained from the fact that the most binding guarantee for a promise is to swear by the name of Allah or to read the Fatiha. It is also customary for the villagers to take an oath sacrifice for God or a saint, which is a kind of conditional oath involving the slaying of an animal on the fulfilment of a certain task and the attendant danger that may ensue in the event of perjury

The certainty and uniformity in religious beliefs and rituals specially noted in the observance of the fasting month, is an index of the religious group cohesiveness. All the villagers belong to the Maliki school of the Sunni tradition. Most of the adult villagers attend the Friday noon prayers, and say their regular daily prayers either at home or in the mosque. There is a well-known Islamic tradition believed by the villagers that group prayers are more efficacious and rewarding than those said alone.

It is no exaggeration to say that the folk culture of the village is permeated by religious sanctions and moral values derived from the Islamic traditions as revealed in the Koran and also infused with rituals and beliefs of an older tradition. It is not difficult to assert that there is hardly

[1] See John Walker, *Folk Medicine in Modern Egypt*, London, 1934. Sir E. A. Wallis Budge, *Amulets and Superstitions*, London, 1930.

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who married a member of the carpenter family is usually a source of gossip and warning against such mixture. 582

In pursuing the subject of infant nursing, it is to be noted that the child does not rely entirely on mother's milk during all its nursing period, as after the fourth month it is introduced to premasticated adult food. The bits that cannot be swallowed are collected and inserted again in its mouth. Premasticated food is used more in the case of boys than girls, to help mother's milk in accelerating growth. 853

During nursing it is quite common to see a child sucking his fingers or pushing his fist into his mouth. He is actually encouraged in doing this by his mother, who sometimes puts her own finger into the child's mouth. The need is recognized more during the teething period, that is in the fourth or fifth month. For this purpose of sucking, the mother hangs a kind of loose string round the neck of the child with a bundle of hard stuff tied in a piece of cloth, and this is supposed to assist tooth-cutting. 856

When the mother starts weaning her child, she increases the amount of premasticated food given to it. She begins by weaning her child first from one breast, and later from the other. She stops milk from the breast by rubbing the nipple with a concoction of spices, ground sheep tripe, henna, cactus juice and salt stone. After 'stopping milk' the mother turns her dress back to front so that its neck and side openings hang at the back, the child thus finding no access to the breast. For the first two days of weaning, coloured hard-boiled eggs are given to the child to play with and then to eat, whenever he wishes. In psycho-analytical language, mothers in Silwa recognize weaning as a 'traumatic experience' for the child and do their best to absorb the child's attention in other directions, especially in play with other children or providing it with some delicacies of food. 862

The weaning must always be arranged in such a way that it is completed in two or three days before the beginning of the lunar month. It is believed to be very difficult to wean a child after the appearance of the new moon, and it must be left till towards the end of it. It is also believed that a woman who weans at the beginning of the month will find it difficult to bear children. This must be also observed in connection with the circumcision of girls, so that the girl will not become sterile or find it difficult to conceive. Here, one notes the striking relation between the moon and such social phenomena as weaning and circumcision. One might be led to infer that the moon must have been connected with fertility rites in some periods of Egyptian history. It is also observed by mothers that weaning of their children must not be declared immediately, but after a lapse of at least two weeks for fear of the evil eye, or 'pressure' on the mother's power to conceive. [821] [842] [304] [821]

The third basic need of the child, after the mother's bodily warmth and nursing, is the need for 'evacuation'. For the first four months (before the child can sit up) it is allowed to urinate and defaecate in a piece of cloth wrapped round its body from the waist to the knees, under its 854

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854 garment. This cloth can be removed, washed, or just dried, or changed. The child is often wiped with another cloth, but is not necessarily washed, if it soils itself. At the fourth month it is supported between its mother's feet, sitting to defaecate when the mother senses that it is uncomfortable or when it cries, and the cloth is put on only when it goes to bed. No fuss of any kind is made about urine, while more attention is given to faeces, yet revulsion is never shown by the mother. When the child starts to walk
863 it is trained to say 'kaka' when it wants to defaecate, whereupon the mother lifts its garment and asks it to go to a special corner or room in the house or to go outside. After the age of three or four most parents insist that both boys and girls defaecate outside the house, or go to the special room in the house.

514 While the boys from now on always perform their evacuation outside, he girls are confined to the house again after they reach the age of twelve. Girls always squat for urination while boys stand, but on reaching adolescence the latter squat also. In the case of boys, the tucking up of the dress or pants and the crouching posture of evacuation tend to direct attention to the exposed genitals, while in the case of girls, after the age of six or seven at most, they, in contrast, envelop the whole process with their dress, which is never tucked up. One can see boys of all ages up to eight or nine evacuating within sight, with no sense of embarrassment. When they reach puberty they seek out-of-the-way places, facing a stone or a heap.

863 It is not without justification that one can make the hypothesis that the absence of disgust towards faeces and urine with regard to the infants' early training is a cultural way of conditioning the individual to bear tolerantly the odour that attends the village sanitary conditions, swamps, and handling of animal dung either as fertilizer or as fuel.

856 Sitting and teething are considered as important events to be watched in the child's growth. By the end of the fourth month the mother begins to train her child to sit up. The saying is that a boy of four months must be able to sit up, or he should be beaten. The girl is expected to be able to sit up a little later, at the end of the fifth month. The mother makes her son sit up on the ground with his legs outstretched, supporting his back with her hands, or puts him in a large mixing or cooking pan with tall curving sides. If the boy is not taught to sit up for himself at this age, and abandon gradually the horizontal suckling position, he would be liable to have an [827] unpleasant breath smell when he grows up.

It is also recognized that teething is accompanied by either ophthalmia or diarrhoea. The mother's milk is sometimes used as a treatment for the [159] sore eyes at this period.

852 On the first instance of the breaking of any of the milk teeth, at the age of five or six, the tooth is put into donkey dung and thrown into the 'sun's eye', asking the sun to change the donkey's tooth for a tooth of a gazelle.

● [304] Another important event in the child's life after the end of the forty

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days is the piercing of the ridge of the ears 'while they are still soft'. The girl would have three holes in each ear, two at the top and one in the lobe, while the boy would have only two holes in the right ear, one at the top and one in the lobe. A thread is inserted into each hole so that the hole is not closed during the healing period. Immediately the punctures are healed, earrings are worn. The custom is gradually dying out in the case of boys, with the exception of the first son, whereas it is still universal with all the girls. Boys are expected to discard their silver earrings by the age of eight or nine while the girls do not discard them until they are replaced before marriage by larger golden earrings.

At the end of the second year, or normally after they are weaned, both boys and girls have their first haircut (for the girls it is actually the first and last). This is accompanied, in the case of a boy, by a dish of boiled maize called 'karama', to be eaten by whoever attends, usually small boys and poor people. The boy's head is left normally with three tufts of hair, one in the middle, and one on each side, the rest being shaved off by a razor. The girl is left with a large tuft on the top of the head, while the sides are shaved all round.

The care and handling of the infant are of great significance for this enquiry. Whenever the child is on his mother's lap, or astride her hip, or sitting or crawling beside her, he is always fussed over. Mother or visitors try to win a smile from the baby by tickling or caressing him, by turning his face outwards and then inwards and so on, or in the case of a boy by playing with his genitals. On other occasions they talk to the baby or make noises to attract his attention. A very common way of playing with the child is to support him under his arms, throw him upwards and then catch him, and this is repeated while singing to the child or talking to him.

The time of changing clothes or bathing the baby occasions the greatest amount of bodily stimulation, where not only the mother but perhaps the other children pass their hands over the child's body, calling him 'O thou fish, thy body is as smooth as the fish'. Moreover the amount of kissing on the mouth or on the cheeks that the infant experiences far exceeds any conjectures from the European point of view. Mothers have no objection to visitors kissing their children; on the contrary, it is supposed to be one of the means of 'feeling at home' to kiss the young children, or a good gesture of friendship.

As to the other features of development, such as walking and talking, the writer has found no significant differences between what he has seen in Silwa, and what he knows about the general stages of children's growth elsewhere. Here there is great variety; where some children can walk at the end of the first year, others walk a few months later; while some talk during the second year, others talk only during the third year.

The teaching of the child to walk and talk is not usually a matter for adults as much as for the older children, who usually take their [illegible] outside when they play. The adults do not take as active a part in teaching their children as do their older brothers or sisters.

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THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS AND EVENTS OF CHILDHOOD

862 It was mentioned earlier that food is considered almost sacred and it
269 was shown how this attitude towards it was instilled into the children. They call bread 'baraka' and swear by it.[1] Moreover, it is worth noting that while the children talk of, and display food freely, and have no shame about eating anywhere, adults are quite secretive and scrupulous about their food. The latter are wary of being exposed to the eye of a stranger while they are eating; they feel that if they do not ask the stranger to join them in the meal, he might have a bad effect on what they are eating. It is the custom to insist on any unexpected person joining them in eating even for one bite by saying, 'Come and say "In the Name of God".' The invited person in this case usually expresses his willingness to have a bite with the others to still any fear or suspicion, or says that he has just eaten, 'Thanks to God'. Food carried from the house to the guest house is usually covered, not necessarily for hygienic purposes, but for the fear of being 'breathed in' by onlookers. This secretive attitude towards food is usually inculcated into the children when they are old enough to be able to know when to stop eating or postpone it, if a visitor suddenly comes to the house. It is not surprising to find food as one of the major interests in children's lives in a community which divides the year into the seasons of richness and plenty, referring to the times immediately after the harvest, while
[805] those times preceding it are called seasons of hunger.

852 The greatest experience that the child undergoes during childhood is
304 circumcision. The boy is usually circumcised between the ages of three and six, and his circumcision is accompanied by a ceremony which is justified on religious grounds. The adult public celebration of the occasion consists of communal feasting of all the male relatives and friends invited on the evening previous to the evening of the rite, while the female relatives partake of a meal in the house. In the case of a girl's circumcision, the celebration is confined purely to women, and no man, not even the father, is expected to participate, or to show an interest in it.

Before the actual celebrations of the ceremony, the boy who is to be circumcised is taken round the village with a group of his age-mates and older boys, inviting relatives and friends in their houses to join the celebration of the occasion. Sometimes the invitation is oral, and sometimes by handing over a written invitation.

The day of circumcision arrives, and as expected during the evening communal meal, boys would be eating from separate trays apart from the
[264] adults, while some of them would be serving the rest of the guests by fetching more bread, or more vegetables, and washing hands before and after the meal, while an adult would be chosen to distribute the meat from a common dish. The meal would end with the reading of 'Fatiha' to render the event successful, and expressed hope that the guests might one day attend the child's marriage ceremony, and blessings invoked for the parents and the family. The meal would be followed by reciting parts from the

[1] See Chapter I.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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Koran, and readings of the Prophet's birthday story. During all this, the children would either be sitting behind the adults or clustered in one of the corners of the house ready to execute their elders' commands.

Later on, the actual circumcising of the boy takes place. The child is now the centre of attention. He sits on the ground with a colourful girl's headcloth round his neck, while the village barber shaves his head, a task which should occupy him for three or four hours before performing the operation. Meanwhile, as the women are rejoicing by singing and playing on the tambourine inside the house, the father's invited relatives and friends would be bringing along their contributions (nakout) of money or of corn. Every time the father receives a contribution, he tells an announcer, who is a specialist for this job, that so-and-so has delivered his contribution. The announcer in a chanting voice declares that so-and-so, adding his relationship to the child if he is a close relative, or just adding paternal uncle or maternal uncle, has presented the 'bridegroom' with silver and gold, and entreats God to compensate him with all the good things in the world. The name of one contributor might be announced more than once, and this depends on the amount of contribution, and the closeness of relationship to the child. After each contribution, the village barber shaves, or at least pretends to shave, a little more of the boy's hair. When the father sees that all those whom he has invited or expected to contribute have arrived, the announcer retires, by which time the barber has finished shaving the boy.[1] Then the actual circumcision takes place by seating the child on a large vessel. The instruments for the operation are nowadays given to the barber by the Ministry of Health as well as instructions and ointment for the post-operative treatment.

Just before the operation begins, the child casts off the girl's headcloth and puts on a new garment consisting of an open white shift covered by another open green garment, similar to the type of dress which a religious person is expected to wear on certain occasions. During the operation, the boy is encouraged not to cry or show any signs of pain, otherwise he would be accused of girlishness. He is held back, and forcibly prevented from looking at his penis, otherwise it is believed he would become impotent.

This is immediately followed by a procession of men and boys followed by women and girls to visit the mosque, after which a group of female relatives and friends of the mother, together with the children, take the child to gaze on the Nile water. During all this, sweets, dates, and peanuts would be distributed. For a whole week the child, wearing charms round his neck, is not encouraged to walk, and is fed not so much on bread or meat, but mainly on boiled eggs, dried peas, salted peanuts and rice.

After a week or ten days, the circumcised boy is taken with other boys on a round asking for the 'custom' (al-'ada) from relatives and neighbours, and friends in the village. On this occasion all the boys carry palm-tree

[1] If the boy is too young for a head shave, his older brother or cousin may take his place.

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branches in their hands, and in front of every house they stand chanting at the top of their voices, while swaying their branches. They call out together, 'Give us the custom, either a pigeon, a fat hen, a cock, or an egg'. At the end of the round the group of boys return home with what they may have collected to partake of a meal well-prepared by the mother of the circumcised boy. This round is actually considered to be the female contributions to the circumcised boy and his family. In this way the boy and his age group not only witness the web of social reciprocity, but they are actively introduced to it.

The purpose of circumcising girls, according to the village midwife, is to prevent any suspicion on the bridegroom's part that the bride is not a virgin. The midwife, with her surgical instruments provided by the Ministry of Health, seats the girl on a chair, or vessel, while three women assist her by holding the girl's legs apart as well as supporting her back, a posture very similar to that assumed at childbirth. Girls are usually circumcised at a later age than the boys, when they are about seven or eight.

After the operation the legs are tied together at the thighs and ankles to prevent violent movement and thus render the operation successful. The ties are usually undone after a week or ten days, during which time the girl is fed in a similar way to the boy.

Anthropologists consider circumcision ceremonies as *rites de passage*; they are undoubtedly of great significance to the family, as well as to the child, especially if he is old enough. It is an intra-familial activity, and an occasion for the exchange of mutual obligations. The father receives his due contributions from relatives and friends to whom he has rendered such an obligation previously. Fathers keep a book, where they register those who have brought their contributions, and the amount which they have given. Traditionally, the fact that someone contributes to your ceremony counts rather than the amount of his contributions, that is, the relevant and compelling force is the carrying-out of mutual obligations on an occasion of circumcision. To illustrate this, a father who has one son should contribute to all those who have sent their contributions on the occasion of circumcising, not only their first sons, but all their sons. It is obvious here that the qualitative rather than the quantitative aspect of the social obligation is the more important. For the last ten years, however, there has been an increasing trend towards contributing on the same number of occasions as one has received a contribution from a particular person. Discussion and wrangling occasionally arise as to the appropriate way of 'give and take' on such occasions. Some people have struck a compromise so that the contributions are equalized between the same number of children, whereas the contributions towards the extra number of children are less in value and are made with a view to keeping the social relationships intact.

In ceremonies of circumcision, wedding, and preparation for pilgrimage, contributions (nakout) play a considerable part, especially in the case of

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men. One woman told me that a girl who beautifies herself will find difficulty in marriage and will have no 'lamah' (halo) about her to please her husband when married.

During adolescence, however, the girl would be prepared for marriage by tattooing her lower lip and by a special mode of hair style, distinguishable from the loose hanging hair of childhood. For tattooing the lip, a special woman is invited to prick the lip with a pack of needles smeared in black soot mixed with animal bile. The hair dressing of an adolescent girl and a woman is very much like that among the Sudanese women.[1] A special woman called 'mashata' plaits the hair into small tresses tightly covering the head. This style of hair makes a firm basis for fixing her ornaments on marriage, which are usually composed of three golden disks (dinar, pl. dananeer) that dangle over the forehead, and a silver chain connected to the ends of the hair at the back.

It is during adolescence also that boys show the greatest interest in singing, and for this purpose they form the so-called 'circle of romance boys' (awlad al hawa). In these circles, held usually in summer, on festive occasions, weddings and circumcision, youths give vent to their new interest in love. They perform by standing in a circle with one taking the lead by singing a song while the other boys listen. On finishing, they repeat in chorus the last line again and again, clapping their hands rhythmically till the first singer or another youth starts another song. Some of these songs are composed extemporaneously, while others are old ones repeated. The following three examples are typical of the songs sung:

Ya bit ya um ghawaish,
khallaiti 'agli taish,
nassaitini al ma'aish,
Chorus: Wi dmoui 'al'ashik 'al khaddain.

O thou girl with bracelets,
thou hast rendered my mind crazy,
and hast made me neglect my work.
Chorus: And the tears of the lover are on the cheeks.

. . . . .

Rakbah min foag wasil,
tihki bil hasil,
mafeesh adab wasil.
Chorus: 'Ala annabi wahhid wi salli.

She is on the top (on the roof),
telling what has happened,
she has no politeness at all.
Chorus: Say God is one and pray for the Prophet.

[1] Cf. Sophie Zenovsky, 'Marriage Customs in Omdurman', in *Sudan Notes and Records*, Vol. XXVI, Part ii, 1945, p. 244.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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CHAPTER III

PERSONAL DECORATION AND ORNAMENTS

LOVE of personal adornment seems to be instinctive in the human race, and it has probably existed in some form or another as an element in human character from the earliest times. The beautifying of the person may be achieved in a variety of ways, sometimes involving mutilation of the body. A study of the true inwardness of ornaments and personal decoration in general is most instructive, and may serve a useful purpose on occasions, as I hope to show later.

The simple jewellery of the modern Egyptian peasants, and their body-markings, such as tattooing, supply material for an interesting chapter in the study of these people.

The *fellāḥeh* (peasant woman) is by no means more backward than the average Englishwoman in her endeavours to make the most of whatever personal attractions she may possess, and, as I have stated, her demands for gold and silver ornaments may involve her unfortunate husband in considerable financial embarrassment.

The young girl, usually a mere child, who is on the look-out for a husband often wears a necklace of particular shape, made of gold coins. It is quite an attractive ornament, and also serves as an outward and visible sign of her wealth. A man when about to marry may present his bride with such a necklace, investing some of his money in it, for the women's jewellery is often regarded as a safe form of investment, which can easily be turned into ready cash should the necessity arise. Every girl has her ears and nose bored at a fairly early age, when she becomes the proud possessor of a pair of earrings (Fig. 18, bottom), as well as of a nose-ring (Fig. 18, in centre of necklace). These may be of gold or silver, or, in the case of the poorer people, even of brass. Anklets may be of silver-gilt, silver, or some white metal. Bracelets are usually much in request, and are made of glass of various colours (Fig. 18, extreme left and right), of small beads woven together to form a

[Text continues on p. 49]

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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765 301 When a woman's husband dies one of the first things she does is to take off all her jewellery—nose-ring, earrings, finger-rings, gold, silver, or brass bracelets—wearing instead a necklace of dark blue or black beads (Fig. 19) and sometimes blue or black earrings and bracelets. The nose-ring is discarded for good, unless she marries again.

682 765 301 Knowledge of this custom is sometimes very useful. I was calling on a certain Captain of Police one day and happened to arrive at the moment when he was investigating a case of murder. An old man had been waylaid not far from his village and killed, but all his fellow-villagers declared that they knew nothing whatever about it. The wife, a son by a former marriage, and some other relations had been locked up pending investigations. The wife, very negroid [192] in type, as, indeed, were many of the people of her village, was, together with her stepson, undergoing examination when I arrived. The officer strongly suspected that the wife was implicated, and possibly the stepson also. The woman was much younger than her husband, who was, for a *fellāḥ*, a man of some substance. I watched the woman carefully while she was being questioned, and she certainly was far from prepossessing in appearance. On looking more closely I noticed that she was still wearing all her ornaments of gold and other materials, including her nose-ring. If she had really cared anything about her unfortunate husband she would have removed them immediately upon hearing that he was dead. I asked my friend the Captain of Police if he had noticed this, and then pointed out to him how many ornaments she was still wearing. He was delighted with this piece of evidence, which had quite escaped his notice, and which certainly went to confirm his suspicion. This incident shows that a knowledge of personal adornment, and of the customs associated with certain ornaments, may be quite useful to officials who are concerned with criminal investigation among the *fellāḥīn*.

304 554 789 Among the *fellāḥīn* it is usually the custom to pierce one ear of a young boy if he is an only son, and in this ear he wears a decorative ring (Fig. 20). When he gets older he discards the ring, but the perforation is always visible. No reason was given for this custom, but I suspect it is most likely a method of protection against the evil eye, and is possibly regarded as a means of disguising his sex.

000 Tattooing is another form of personal decoration. It is popular

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PERSONAL DECORATION AND ORNAMENTS

Tattooing is another form of personal decoration. It is rarer with both sexes among the peasants, and it may be resorted to for utilitarian as well as for decorative purposes. The operation of tattooing is a very painful one, and is performed by specialists in the art. Sometimes a woman tattoos women and girls, and a man men and boys, but there is no hard-and-fast rule about this (see Fig. 25). The street cry of the tattooer is "*Yā ṣabī ta'āla dukk!*" ("O lad, come and be tattooed!"). A woman who desires to be tattooed will, on hearing a female tattooer utter her street cry, call out, "Come here, O damsel who tattoos!"

FIG. 20. CHILD (AN ONLY SON) WEARING SPECIAL EARRING—FOR WHICH SEE INSET

The implement used in tattooing consists of seven needles fixed into a short stick, which is bound round at the end and then plastered over to keep the needles firmly in position. Sometimes smaller needles, and only five in number, are used for tattooing children. Lamp-black is the pigment employed, and this is usually mixed with oil, though some people say that water is used. However, when I last witnessed the operation of tattooing oil was mixed with the lamp-black.

A tattooer often attends the village market, where he can be seen plying his trade. Samples of the various designs, which are very numerous, are often framed and propped up against the tree

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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304 463 531 under which he squats, so that his clients can choose whatever pattern or patterns they prefer. Some are very elaborate, and must involve considerable suffering on the part of the person who is tattooed with them. Many of the patterns are conventional designs, and I am assured that they have no special meaning, but are chosen according to individual taste and fancy. One pattern is called *esh-shagareh* (the tree), and is the one usually chosen by both men and women to decorate the back of the right hand. So far as I have observed, this pattern when used by women differs slightly from that used by men. The drawing given here (Fig. 21) I made from the hand of a woman; the marks were tattooed on her hand when she was a young girl.

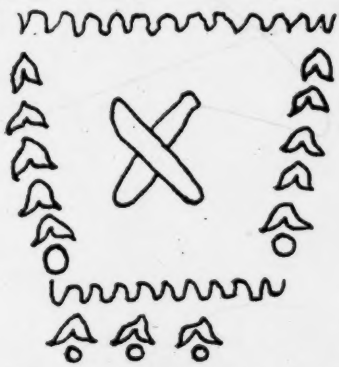

FIG. 21. TATTOO MARKS ON THE BACK OF A WOMAN'S RIGHT HAND AND ACROSS THE BACK OF THE WRIST

FIG. 22. TATTOO MARK FROM EDGE OF LOWER LIP TO BASE OF CHIN

304 531 The women are usually tattooed from the edge of the lower lip down to the base of the chin. The pattern shown in Fig. 22, copied by me from the same woman, is also called *esh-shagareh*. The tattoo on the back of the hand and wrist, as well as on the fingers and thumb, is said to make them strong.

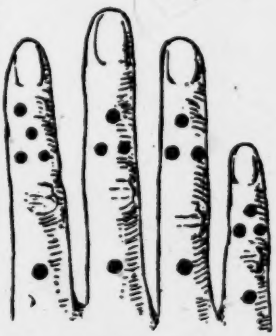

FIG. 23. TATTOO MARKS ON WOMAN'S FINGERS TO MAKE THEM STRONG

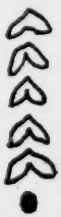

FIG. 24. TATTOO MARKS ON THUMB BELOW THE SECOND JOINT TO MAKE THE THUMB STRONG

304 A boy is often tattooed with a single dot on his chin and another near his right nostril; also most boys have three dots, thus ⁘, tattooed on one arm, just above the wrist. Boys are tattooed in

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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this manner when they are still very young (Fig. 25), for tattooing is considered to be of benefit to them. According to one of my informants, the dot tattooed at the side of the nostril is sometimes done as a cure for toothache. It is a very common mark among a large number of the Arabs; one of them told me that it was done as a sign of their race.

Many of the men among the *fellāḥīn* have a tattoo mark on either temple, the mark being often in the shape of a bird. This is sometimes purely a form of decoration, but it is also done as a cure for headache. One man I know has three short, straight lines tattooed near one side of his forehead. He told me that this was done when he was a boy, as the eye on the same side as the tattoo marks was very weak. He declared that it effected an almost immediate and quite permanent cure.

FIG. 25. WOMAN TATTOOING A YOUNG BOY

Another man I know had three dots tattooed about an inch and a half above each nipple, and three more in the centre of his chest. He also had three more dots tattooed on each shoulder-blade and one behind one ear. He gave me the following account of the history of these marks. One cold day he was warming himself over a fire on which was being cooked some fish which smelled unpleasantly. A woman glanced at his chest, which was bare, but he drew his clothes over it so that she should not see it. From that moment he began to itch, and the people said that he was affected by the fumes (*buhāḳ*)—those, I presume, from the fish. As a remedy for this he was tattooed with the dots as described above, which immediately cured him.

If a woman has lost several children in succession, when another

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F 304 789 If a woman has lost several children in succession, when another one arrives she has it tattooed with a small dot in the centre of its forehead and another on the outer side of the left ankle. She F [306] believes that after this the child will live, because her *ḳarīneh*, seeing these marks, will not attempt to take her child.[1] The belief is that when King David had the interview with the queen of the *aḳrān* described in the following chapter she promised that any child that had these tattoo marks on the forehead and ankle should not be injured by its mother's *ḳarīneh*.

F 304 755 753 776 One man, who was a village guard far south in Upper Egypt, had a fish tattooed on the inner side of one arm, near the wrist. He told me that it was done some years before, when he was possessed by an *'afrīt*, that it quite cured him, and that he had never been troubled in that way since. This fish mark does not always serve a curative purpose, for in a village much farther north I saw F [531] a boy with a similar design tattooed on the back of one of his hands, and he assured me that it was done only as an ornament.

F C 304 787 Most of the Copts have a cross tattooed on the inner sides of the wrists There is a belief among some, if not all, of those Copts belonging to the *fellāḥīn* class that the Abyssinians will one day conquer Egypt, and will kill all the Copts as well as the Muslims if they (the Copts) cannot show this sign on their wrists. The Copts will, it is said, hold up their hands, thus exposing to view the sign of their religion.

F C 304 531 788 One Coptic friend of mine, a man of good position, showed me some tattoo marks on his arm. There was an elaborate pattern on the inner side of his arm, below which were tattooed the dates of the two occasions on which he had gone on pilgrimages to Jerusalem—1911 and 1914. Another Copt told me that his little sister also had the year of her visit to Jerusalem tattooed on one arm, and that in future the year of each succeeding pilgrimage that she made to the sacred city would be similarly recorded. His mother, who had performed the pilgrimage on several occasions, had had each year of this event tattooed on one of her arms. Tattooing can thus be a means of record-keeping.

F 304 463 The operation of tattooing is an exceedingly painful one, and has very often unpleasant results, though the discomfort may be only temporary. One of my servants, a young man of about twenty-two years of age, was very anxious to have the back of his right hand tattooed this year. A specialist in the art was usually

[1] See pp. 69 ff. for explanation of *ḳarineh*.

PERSONAL DECORATION AND ORNAMENTS

present at the weekly market, seating himself, with all his paraphernalia, on the outskirts of the market-place and under the shadow of a tree. A number of patterns were placed before the young man; he at once selected that called *esh-shagareh*, and the tattooer set to work. While working he had no occasion to refer to his pattern; long and constant practice had made him an adept. He would lightly prick out a small portion of the design, then work over it two or three times more, and so proceed until the task was completed. The first finger was not touched, and, when I remarked on this, my servant told me that that finger was never tattooed on a man's hand, but that it was done on a woman's. It took some time before the work was finished, the pain, which was great, being heroically borne by the unfortunate young man. However, I suppose that the thought of how beautiful he would look afterward helped him to endure! I rather fancy that the tattooing of the hand is a sign of manhood; it is certainly a painful initiatory rite. Soon after I returned to my house I found that the young man's hand, and indeed the whole of the right arm, had begun to swell, and that he was decidedly feverish. I made him lie down, and as the morning went on the fever and inflammation increased, and he was unfit to move. I wanted to send for a doctor, but he assured me he would soon be all right, and that most people got like this after having their hand tattooed. Toward the late afternoon he was much better, and by the next morning he had practically recovered.

Among the negroid peoples in Egypt, especially among the Berberines, cicatrization lines are often seen along the cheeks. These are probably tribal marks. Occasionally similar marks are to be seen near the ear or on the side of the forehead, and these have usually been made as a cure for bad eyes, headache, or other ills. Some Egyptians have the marks of two or three short cuts on the side of the face close to the ear. When I inquired as to the meaning of these cuts I was told that they were made because it was the custom. This practice is, I think, tending to die out.

It is quite a common sight to see notches cut along the outer edge of the ear—sometimes in one ear only, sometimes in both. The number of notches also varies, and in some cases only one has been cut. I have never noticed these notches in women's ears. I have observed that this kind of intentional deformation of the ear is common among many of the Arab tribes settled in Egypt,

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and with them it is possibly a racial mark, but the following information was given to me by an Egyptian woman whom I questioned on the subject. Among the *fellāḥīn* the notches are cut when there is supposed to be something wrong with the inside of a child's mouth, and the operation is performed in babyhood. A midwife acts as the surgeon in such cases. She cuts the notch, or notches, with a pair of scissors, and the blood from the wound is rubbed on the roof of the child's mouth. If the mouth is very bad more than one notch is cut.

Long hair is certainly considered a woman's glory in Egypt, though I have rarely, if ever, seen really thick, long hair among the *fellāḥīn* women and girls. However, this defect is easily remedied, and every woman buys long plaits of false hair, which hang down far below her waist. She cuts her hair short on either side of her face, and forms this short hair into flat curls against her cheeks. Over her head she ties a silk or cotton kerchief, a brightly coloured one if she is young, a more sombre one if she has passed her youth, and this keeps the side curls in position. The hair is not dressed every day, but when it is done a double wooden comb is used (Fig. 26), with fine and coarse teeth. The centre of the comb is usually decorated with coloured designs.

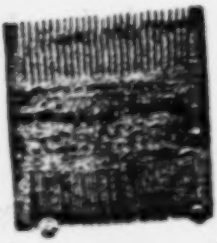

FIG. 26. DOUBLE WOODEN COMB

The long plaits worn by the peasant women are utilitarian as well as decorative. The house-door key is often attached to one of the plaits when the housewife goes off either to shop or to the fields, while from the others hang various charms, some of which are enclosed in small leather cases. One woman I know wore a charm against headache enclosed in a leather case, and also a large opaque bead to keep her husband's love and to make his mother pleased with her. Both these charms were attached to one of her plaits, and she gave me the bead after her husband died.

When a woman becomes a widow she immediately conceals the side curls; in fact, no hair must be seen round her face—it is tucked away under a dark blue or a black kerchief. She wears it like this all her life, unless she remarries, in which case the curls

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BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

I have been told that if a woman remains for a long time after marriage without the prospect of a child she will pray for a son, promising that, in the event of her prayer being answered, she will have the boy's hair shaved, leaving only the tufts, which she will dedicate to the sheikh or sheikhs, or to the saint or saints, with whom she has interceded. When offering such prayers she will probably repair to the tomb of the sheikh, or to the church of the Coptic saint, to whom she wishes to appeal. I was told in Fayūm Province that if a boy is seen with his hair cut into tufts it means that he is an only son, and that this style of headdress will ensure him a long life. The initial cutting of the hair, it should be pointed out, is performed at home.

F 782 842
F [1178]
F [176]

Among the Copts the rite of circumcision should be observed before baptism, according to Dr Butler.[1] The actual ceremony closely resembles the Muslim rite, so that the following description applies to the followers of both religions, the only difference being that whereas the Coptic child should have this operation before baptism, for the Muslim there is no limitation as to age, though it is always carried out during the early years of a child's life. The ceremony entails a certain expense, and is therefore sometimes carried out conjointly with a marriage ceremony, so that the cost may be shared.

F C 852 304
F C [302]

The boy who is to undergo this operation has his hands and feet dyed with *ḥenna* at sunset two days before it takes place. On the following day the barber comes and cuts the boy's hair in a particular way, called *muḳarraṣ*, which means 'made into little loaves or cakes.' I do not think that this form of hairdressing is in any way connected with the tufts of hair described above. After the haircutting the boy is washed, and, so I was told, coins are put on his face. This is probably the same custom as is observed at weddings, when the female visitors who wish to present the bride with small sums of money go up to her and place the coin they wish to give to her on her upturned face. In the case of the boy the money presented in this way is taken by the barber. The boy then has a particular kind of felt cap placed on his head. This cap, which is white in colour, decorated with yellow designs and tassels (Fig. 40), is purchased by the parents especially for the occasion, and worn only for this rite. The cap is further decorated by the attachment of scraps of coloured paper or bits of cloth or muslin. The boy, thus attired, is then placed on a horse, usually, I believe, with his face toward the animal's tail; he is covered up with a shawl, and, with one man holding him securely and another leading

F C [463]
F C [431] [465]
F C [292]

[1] See my article in *Man*, vol. xxv, p. 263.

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the horse, he is paraded through the village, accompanied by musicians. If two brothers are to have this operation at the same time they ride together on one horse. When the perambulation of the village is over the boy is taken home, and all the friends who have placed money on his face, and also the barber, are provided with supper. Music plays an important part at this ceremony, and the musicians keep up a constant beating of drums, clashing of cymbals, and blowing of bagpipes. When the guests have finished supper they all, including the musicians, take their departure. On the following morning the barber only comes to the house and is first paid by the parents, who give him anything from one or two pounds upward. The child is then taken hold of and told not to be afraid. Some one tries to attract his attention, while the barber seizes this opportunity to cut off the foreskin. The boy wears a white *gallabīyeh* for this occasion, with long sleeves, in one of which the foreskin is tied up. The barber then ties the boy's mother and maternal aunt together by binding a turban round their throats, and drags them outside the door of the house. Friends, who by this time have collected outside, come into the house and present the barber with more money, and he then takes his departure. The wound is washed every day, and is anointed with some healing powder, which is, I fancy, *ḥenna*. The foreskin remains in the sleeve of the boy's *gallabīyeh* until the wound is healed, during which period the white gown must also be worn.

FIG. 40. CAP WORN BY A BOY AT HIS CIRCUMCISION CEREMONY

A charm consisting of short lengths of the mid-rib of a palm-branch, deeply notched along one side, is worn by boys after they have been circumcised to keep the wound from going septic, and to ward off the evil eye. Such a charm is worn for seven days after the operation, being suspended from the neck by a string.

No reason could be given as to why the mother and maternal aunt were tied together by the throat and thrust out of the house.

THE FELLĀḤÎN OF UPPER EGYPT

drum (*darâbukkeh*), etc., while at a short distance the tattooer may be engaged in decorating the hand of some youth.[1]

Various entertainers attend most of the larger markets, such as a conjurer, a reciter of legends, musicians accompanied by a male dancer, to say nothing of the fortune-teller, who, seated in a small tent, usually attracts a considerable number of people. He makes a series of holes in sand spread on a handkerchief upon the ground in front of him, and by certain methods of counting these deducts his conclusions. The conjurers are really very clever.

It will thus be seen that business on market-days is pleasantly combined with pleasure.

Conversation is general and loud, sounding to the unaccustomed European ear like violent quarrelling.

When the warmer weather begins the traders erect rough booths, looking like primitive umbrellas, under which they can take shelter from the heat. Both time and patience are required to effect a purchase, for the seller of an article asks quite double the price he will accept. Arguing and gesticulating, the trader and would-be purchaser wrangle over the article until the price is adjusted to the satisfaction of both parties. Sometimes, if the trader is insistent, the would-be purchaser gets up from the ground and proceeds to walk away, whereupon the trader usually betrays a readiness to make further concession, and finally agrees to accept a lower price than that demanded.

In the hot season the water-carrier does good business, as heat, bargaining, and shouting make for thirst. He is usually paid not in money, so I was told, but by small presents of onions, tomatoes, or other delicacies.

I have observed that the people show praiseworthy consideration for the animals which they bring to the market. On their arrival one of the first things the men do is to provide their animals with fodder, and also water if such is obtainable. One year, when I was living in the fields near a village, the market was held close to my camp, and I particularly noticed this consideration for their beasts on the part of the peasants.

As the afternoon advances the traders begin to pack up the goods which have remained unpurchased, and those who have come from a distance load their baggage on their donkeys, and so depart to their several villages.

[1] See Chapter III.

ʿAFĀRĪT

boy fell to the ground, where a stone struck one of his eyes and destroyed the sight. The boy then knew that the donkey was really an *ʿafrīt* which had assumed animal form, and presently he heard it saying, "Don't come here again. If you do I will injure you!"

Up to the present time the boy, who is now a grown man, has never dared to return to this church for fear of the *ʿafrīt*. He told my informant this story himself, and swears to the truth of it.

The *ʿafārīt*, as I have already explained, sometimes leave their subterranean home and come above ground. It is therefore considered dangerous to stamp on the ground, to strike it with a stick, or to throw anything violently on it. Such acts should be especially avoided at night, when the *ʿafārīt* are believed to come up in large numbers. If a man, therefore, has to walk some distance at night he is glad if he can get a fisherman to accompany him, for he believes that then no *ʿafrīt* will come near him. The *ʿafārīt* are afraid of fishermen and of their nets, and when they see these men throwing their nets they run away in terror. One woman told me that the *ʿafārīt* fear that they may get caught in the nets.

A few days after I had left a certain village in Upper Egypt a boy who was employed by the *ʿomdeh* (headman of the village) was in the building containing the machinery installed by the *ʿomdeh* for pumping up water for irrigating his fields. It was at night, and for some reason or other the boy happened to stamp on the ground with his feet. Soon after he lay down to sleep, but was aroused by an *ʿafrīt* who tried to pluck out his eyes. The boy cried out, "Oh, leave me, and forgive me!" But the *ʿafrīt* refused, saying that when he had stamped on the ground he had injured the head of one of his children. The boy cried out, and then, being a Copt, crossed himself, whereupon the *ʿafrīt* disappeared.

That *ʿafārīt* are capable of kindly actions is shown in the following belief. A boy who is still uncircumcised may be mysteriously carried away when sleeping beside his mother at night. He will be brought back to his sleeping-place on the same night, and on the following morning his mother will find that he has been circumcised, the operation having been much better done than if it had been performed by the village barber; moreover, the wound will be found to have already healed. In such a case it is believed that the boy has a good *ḳarīn* who has brought good *ʿafārīt* to perform this painful operation painlessly.

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ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ANALOGIES

I have pointed out on pp. 38 f. that it is to her brother that a woman has recourse when trouble arises between her and her husband. This is evidently a deeply rooted custom, for in the *Complaints of the Peasant*, a literary work of the Herakleopolitan Period (*c.* 2445–2160 B.C.), the peasant flatteringly describes the High Steward Rensi, to whom all his nine petitions are addressed, as "the brother of her that is put away."[1] Unfaithfulness in a wife was evidently punished with death in ancient[2] as it is in modern Egypt. Within the last year or two a case came to my knowledge of an unchaste girl being burned to death by her father and other male relatives, an act that may be compared with the burning of the faithless wife of the chief lector Ubaoner in one of the stories in *King Kheops and the Magicians*.[3]

The love of son for mother, of which I have spoken on p. 45, was evidently as strong in ancient Egyptian families as it is to-day. The following injunction of the sage Anii to his son in respect of his mother bears a striking resemblance to what my friend (p. 45) said to me about his own mother:

> Double the bread that thou givest to thy mother, and carry her as she carried [thee]. She had a heavy load in thee, and never left it to me. When thou wast born after thy months, she carried thee yet again about her neck, and for three years her breast was in thy mouth. She was not disgusted at thy dung, she was not disgusted, and said not: "What do I?" She put thee to school, when thou hadst been taught to write, and daily she stood there . . . with bread and beer from her house. When thou art a young man and takest to thee a wife and art settled in thine house, keep before thee how thy mother gave birth to thee, and how she brought thee up further in all manner of ways. May she not do thee harm nor lift up her hands to God, and may he not hear her cry.[4]

The modern Egyptian women closely resemble their ancestors in their love of personal adornment, though, to be sure, the jewellery of to-day, particularly the earrings and bracelets, are less massive than they were, at least in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties. The bead collars worn by many of the modern peasant women are very much like those that the women are depicted as wearing in paintings and reliefs of all periods.

Tattooing (pp. 50 ff.) may have been practised in the predynastic age.[5] But that this method of personal adornment was

[1] A. Erman, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 161 and note 3.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 38.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 239; see also A. M. Blackman, *Luxor and its Temples*, pp. 25 f.
[5] J. Capart, *Primitive Art in Egypt* (London, 1905), pp. 23, 30.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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F A 304
F A 302
A [538]
A 113

in vogue in Egypt during the Middle Kingdom (2160–1788 B.C.) is definitely proved by a blue faience figure of a girl dating from the Eleventh to Thirteenth Dynasty and by the mummies of two girls dating from the Eleventh Dynasty. Both the mummies and the faience figure have tattoo marks on the body and the limbs.[1]

Either locks of false hair fastened on, or whole wigs, were commonly used by the ancient Egyptian women.[2] The long plaits of hair worn by the modern peasant women (p. 56) can certainly be matched in ancient times;[3] Professor Petrie found a long plait of hair and a false fringe even in a First-Dynasty royal tomb at Abydos.[4] We have no indication, however, that the plaits served the same utilitarian purposes that they often serve nowadays (see p. 56)! It is to be observed that the wooden combs used to-day in dressing the hair (p. 56, Fig. 26) are very like the ancient ones (Fig. 156).

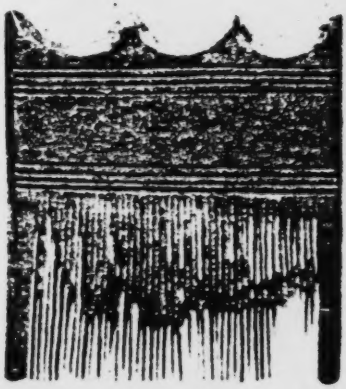

FIG. 156. ANCIENT COMB
After A. Erman and H. Ranke, *Aegypten und aegyptisches Leben im Altertum*, Pl. 19, 1.

The painting of the eyes with *koḥl* was practised as much in ancient times as it is at the present day (p. 59), and by both men and women. In a satirical papyrus dating from the later New Kingdom, and now preserved in the Turin Museum, there is a caricature of a woman looking into a hand-mirror and 'making up.'[5] The constant references to perfumes in the ancient religious and literary texts[6] make it evident that the modern love of scent (p. 59) is not a recently acquired taste.

[1] H. E. Winlock, "The Egyptian Expedition, 1922–1923," Part II of *The Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*, December, 1923, pp. 22, 26, 28.
[2] A. Erman, *op. cit.*, pp. 153, 248; G. Elliot Smith and Warren R. Dawson, *Egyptian Mummies* (London, 1924), p. 117, Fig. 33.
[3] A. Erman and H. Ranke, *op. cit.*, p. 243.
[4] W. M. F. Petrie, *Abydos*, Part I (London, 1902), Pl. IV, Fig. 7.
[5] A. Erman and H. Ranke, *op. cit.*, p. 258.
[6] *E.g.* A. Erman, *op cit.*, pp. 28, 33, 61, 133, 209, 244, 247, 249, 252.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

"found the gods waiting, wrapped in their garments, their white sandals on their feet. Then cast they their sandals to the ground, then threw they off their garments. 'Our heart was not glad until thou camest,' said they."

The custom of shaving, in performance of a vow, a boy's head save for a number of tufts, which are dedicated to one or more Muslim or Coptic saints, and of ceremonially cutting off the tufts when they have grown to a certain length (pp. 84 ff.), is evidently very ancient. Clay balls containing infantile hair, such as are

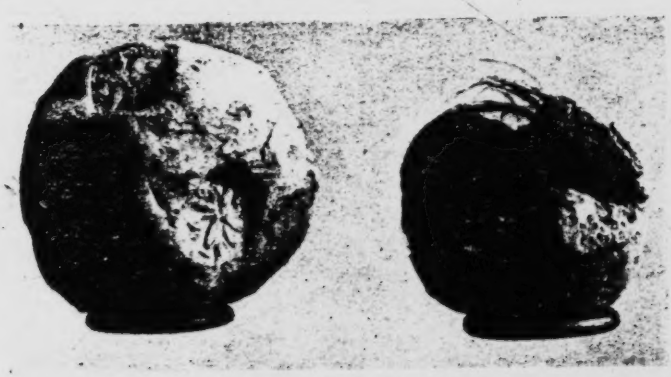

FIG. 161. ANCIENT CLAY BALLS FROM EL-'AMARNEH, ONE BROKEN AND SHOWING INFANTILE HAIR INSIDE

described on p. 86, have been found both at el-'Amarneh (Fig. 161) and in a Twentieth-Dynasty tomb at el-Lāhūn.[1] Herodotus[2] seems to be referring to this or some very similar custom when he says:

> All the inhabitants of the cities perform their vows to the keepers [of the sacred animals] in the following manner. Having made a vow to the god to whom the animal belongs, they shave either the whole heads of their children, or a half, or a third of the head, and then weigh the hair in a scale against silver, and whatever the weight may be, they give to the keeper of the animals; and she in return cuts up some fish, and gives it as food to the animals. Such is the usual mode of feeding them.

Circumcision (pp. 87 f.) seems to have been practised universally in ancient times (as it is in modern Egypt) until the reign of the Emperor Hadrian, when it was restricted to candidates for the

[1] W. S. Blackman, *Man*, vol. xxv, pp. 65 ff.
[2] ii, 65.

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Ancient Egypt MR5

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ANALOGIES

priesthood.[1] A relief in an Old Kingdom tomb-chapel at Saḳḳāreh[2] depicts the circumcision of two boys, the operation being performed, anyhow in one case, by a funerary priest (*ḥm-kȝ*, "servant of the *ka*"). I mention on p. 88 that, when the barber is about to cut off the foreskin, the boy is taken hold of and told not to be afraid. In the above-mentioned relief one of the operators is represented as saying: "Hold him, do not let him move about [?]," to which the assistant replies: "I will do your bidding."

I refer on pp. 43, 47, and 90 to the early age at which modern Egyptian girls of the peasant class are often married. In Roman times we know that boys of fifteen married girls of twelve and thirteen.[3]

Charms to win love (pp. 90 ff., 224), and also to separate a man from his wife (*cf.* pp. 190 ff.), were employed in ancient Egypt, and examples of such are preserved in magical papyri dating from the Roman age.[4]

We possess a number of ancient Egyptian marriage contracts (*cf.* p. 92). The two earliest date from the reign of Takelōthis I or II, of the Twenty-second Dynasty (895–874 or 860–834 B.C.),[5] the rest mostly from Ptolemaic times.[6] A perfectly preserved marriage contract dating from the reign of the last native Egyptian Pharaoh, Nektanebos, was published a few years ago by Dr Junker.[7] As it is quite complete and as no English translation of it has ever appeared, I think the following may perhaps interest my readers:

> Year 15, second month of the season of Inundation, of Pharaoh Nektanebos (may he live, prosper, and be happy!): The *msḥ*[8] of Edfu, who belongeth to the Wall of Nektanebos,[9] Usir'an, son of Eskhons, whose mother is Tentmehet, saith to the lady Taubasti, daughter of Eskhons, whose mother is Tamunis: I have made thee my wife, I have given thee $\frac{5}{10}$ of a *deben* of silver, making $2\frac{1}{2}$ staters, making again $\frac{5}{10}$ of a *deben* of silver, as thy woman's gift.[10] If I abandon thee as wife [*i.e.*,

[1] See Herodotus, ii, 36 f., 104; G. Elliot Smith and Warren R. Dawson, *Egyptian Mummies*, p. 93; A. M. Blackman, "Priest, Priesthood (Egyptian)" in Hastings, *op. cit.*, vol. x, pp. 299 f.
[2] J. Capart, *Une rue de tombeaux*, Pl. LXVI.
[3] A. Erman and H. Ranke, *Aegypten und aegyptisches Leben im Altertum*, p. 180.
[4] F. Lexa, *La magie dans l'Egypte antique* (Paris, 1925), vol. ii, pp. 139 ff.
[5] G. Möller, *Zwei ägyptische Ehevertrage aus vorsaïtische Zeit* (Berlin, 1918).
[6] See F. Ll. Griffith, *Catalogue of the Demotic Papyri in the John Rylands Library* (Manchester, 1909), vol. iii, pp. 114 ff., 139 ff.
[7] H. Junker, *Papyrus Lonsdorfer I* (Vienna, 1921).
[8] Unknown title.
[9] Either a fort built by Nektanebos or a quarter of the town newly founded by him.
[10] See F. Ll. Griffith, *op. cit.*, p. 114, note 8.

He has rather large, flattish feet and his average height is about 5 ft. 6 ins. 142

The women are similar, but in proportion. They seem, however, to preserve the original type more purely. (²⁸)

These are the features of a single race and of a single type. As with all living things, varieties are not wanting, but they are never wildly different from the norm. For example, the cranial index (about 75) is one point higher in Lower Egypt. There is a slight tendency to the Negroid type as Nubia is approached. Maqrizi and 'Abdel Latif had already noted this in the fourteenth century, and any traveller who gets as far as Aswan can see it for himself. The *Sa'idi*, or Upper Egyptian, who lives in a drier and hotter climate, is taller, more bronzed, and more vigorous and muscular than the fellah of the Delta. [141]

(2) *Care and Clothing of the Body*

The fellah is not a hairy type of man. He wears his hair cut short, except when in mourning for a male of his household; but he likes to wear a moustache as a sign of virility. In childhood his head is clean-shaven, apart from the ritual tuft. When he becomes old and venerable he lets his beard grow. 302 [888]

The women's hair is too much neglected to be plentiful. Their meagre locks are sometimes tied up with russet or black ribbons, but always hidden under the veil or gathered into a kerchief. [291]

Since the earliest times both sexes have removed the body hair with either a razor or a paste of sugar and alum. 302 304

Like all ancient peoples with a long tradition, the fellaheen mark their skin with designs ritual, aesthetic and hygienic, which have been handed down from time immemorial. Incision and all forms of coloration are intended not only for ornament, but also as charms and prophylactics.

Girls have the lobes of both ears pierced, and sometimes the side of one nostril. These perforations are kept open by a thread until the ear- or nose-ring is inserted. 304 463

All boys, Moslem as well as Coptic, are circumcised with great ceremony by the village barber.

F 304 Sometimes, though less commonly nowadays, young girls have the clitoris excised. In some regions boys have their right ears pierced.

The fellaheen do not gash their cheeks like the Nubians (Berberines), but they colour themselves, especially by tattooing, which is perhaps the main distinguishing mark of the fellaheen, and is applied to men and women alike in adolescence.

In the middle of the forehead or the chin, on the temples or the backs of the hands, appear dots or geometrical patterns; F [532] and on the chest, back or forearm there may be rough designs, such as a sword or tree, a name or a date, and for the Copts C [532 a cross more or less floriated. This tattooing is rarely found 304] lower than the waist, and is never obscene.

F 304 463 The work is done by a specialist, usually a Bedouin of the same sex as the patient. The operation takes place in the open, at a street corner on market-day. The method is very primitive and causes painful swellings. The tattooer traces the lines of the pattern selected at a chosen spot on the skin with a *style* made of five to seven needles bound together, or with a sort of pricking stamp. Then he colours the bleeding pattern with lamp-black mixed in oil or spirit. An indelible greenish tint is thus obtained.

F 302 The use of henna (*lawsonia inermis*) to dye the hair, hands, feet or perhaps only the nails, is a characteristically Egyptian affectation. It goes back to the Twentieth Dynasty, and Islam has encouraged it (''). The application of henna is a delicate affair. A poultice, made with the powdered leaves, has to be applied hot and kept on from three to twenty-four hours according to quality. This produces a reddish-orange or brown colouring, which lasts about a fortnight.

F 302 587 515 Widows dye their hair with henna, to appear younger and attract a second husband. Young women use it to clean their heads and kill lice, to stop hair from coming out, and to make themselves pretty. The shaven heads of children are reddened with henna as a hygienic precaution. The hands, feet and fingernails of the women are only so coloured once or twice a year, at the great festivals.

F 302 *Kohl* ('') is used to blacken the eyelids and eyebrows, and make the eyes look larger; its function is both decorative

and hygienic. There is no woman who does not use this 302
inexpensive cosmetic, both for herself and for her children.
On a holiday or when she is tired, she neatly applies it with a
kind of stylet dipped into the phial of black.

Circumcision is a therapeutic, tattooing a scarification, 304
henna a poultice, *kohl* an eye-salve; for these aesthetic 302
devices also serve the fellaheen as preventives or remedies. 278
At the same time they also represent magical rites: circum- 777
cision is an act of consecration, tattooing has a symbolic
value, henna is a commemorative, *kohl* keeps off the evil
eye. Thus a luxury is never devoid of meaning or utility.

The fellaheen do not bathe for pleasure or for clean- 515
liness. They have enough contact with water at their work,
or in their Moslem ritual ablutions (30). Every evening these
ablutions of hands, feet, face and private parts assure, at
least to the men, a minimum of cleanliness. The children
splash about naked as soon as they can, or whenever the [857]
beasts have to be watered. The women go into the water
dressed and in groups, to wash their dirty clothes and them-
selves at the same time. For this they use clay or a piece [296]
of wood, and occasionally soap. In many villages the women
never have a thorough wash, except on the occasion of their
marriage, and once a year at the Great Bairam.

The dress of the fellaheen constitutes the distinguishing 291
mark of Egypt. While many everyday actions and customs
are common to the peasantry of all countries, or at least
to all those who are poor, or live in Moslem lands, the fellah
differs from them all in his manner of dress, which is
immediately recognizable. Yet there is nothing picturesque
or fanciful about it, no complication or embroidery such
as distinguishes the village dress of Syria and Palestine.

The men wear on their heads the simplest form of covering,
a mere skull-cap, which gives no protection against the sun.
This brownish felt cap or *libda* is so distinctive of the poor
fellah that its very name has furnished him with a title.
He is often called *abu libda*, the fellow with a cap, figuring
in many a popular tale. Sometimes, and in the case of boys
almost always the cap is made of white calico (*taqiya*). On
special occasions, if the fellah is better off or more pious,
particularly in the south, he will wind round his cap a long
white cloth which serves to protect his neck. This is due to
Moslem influence. A good *libda* is deep, and should come

functions of grocer and druggist, café-keeper and innkeeper, money-lender and banker. He is the most Egyptianised of Europeans. He has no objection to living right in the village, among the fellaheen if not with them, and on them if not for them. He has brought into this closed world the gramophone and the games of the West. He robs the fellaheen and teaches them the use of narcotics, but he is unfailingly obliging. Though his rates are exorbitant, he will lend money on request without asking too many questions. He sells on credit, and when he buys he pays cash. The fellaheen appreciate his resourcefulness and enterprise.

Other less important but more popular figures stand out from the mass by virtue of some well-defined social functions long sanctified by custom.

First comes the *mizayen* or barber-surgeon. He is a very busy man. He shaves all the fellaheen of his district once a month, and crops their hair. Squatting in front of his client, who also squats, he takes a dish of water between his knees, and an old razor between finger and thumb, and quickly tidies up the face and head. An aching tooth? He will pull it out. Cupping, scarification, purge? No difficulty at all. He is responsible for public health, and therefore performs vaccinations, and notifies deaths to the *'omda*. The *mizayen* also officiates at circumcisions, and on the eve of this operation, or of a wedding, the hair-cutting takes on something of a ritual significance. He surrounds it with ceremony, and in so doing dignifies his art. For his varied services he is paid either in kind at harvest time or in milliemes.

The magician or sorcerer, with his charms, his formulae, his perfumed sachets and his magic remedies, would be a serious rival to the *mizayen*, were it not that his credulous customers are chiefly women. He may live in the village or merely pass through. It is to him that the country women have recourse in order to get the help of jinns, to cast spells, to counteract the evil eye or to ensure conception. No-one can make them believe that this holy man is just a rascal and an impostor. The more magic babble he puts into his rites, the more confidence they place in him. Indeed there are many instances in which trickery is not a sufficient explanation for the effects produced. A whole book might be written on witchcraft in the village, and its affinity

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

One of the methods of "cure" is to draw a cross[1] on the temple of the patient with saliva. This way, if it be free from the harm of vein-cutting, is yet a bad innovation, and will not please those who love the Divine Law, because it may give place to the [p. 63] belief of foolish and simple people, instead of to truth and reality. We have even seen many fools who have tattooed[2] crosses upon their temples to guard against the evil of *Ṣudā'*.

We shall now mention by way of wonder and curiosity, not without doubt and scepticism, a method of which the success is famous in all parts of Egypt for the "cure" of this disease. It is a charm (*'azīma*) which is recited by His Excellency Mahdī Bey, Treasurer of the Public Debt, and those afflicted with headache are immediately "cured." The matter has been verified by experiments and testified to by eye-witnesses. It has been emphatically stated to me that many from the farthest parts of Egypt afflicted with this ailment used to come to the capital with this object, and would return after having obtained a perfect "cure." All I knew about the effect of the charm upon the sick, was that there was no danger in it to life. It would have been well if His Excellency had explained it and imparted it to people in whose veracity one could rely. It is indeed, His Excellency's duty towards humanity in view of the affliction of those tormented with this very oppressive ailment.

[1] [Many Moslem women wear crosses, or hang them on their children to drive away evil spirits, or *'afārīt*. At first sight it appears strange that Moslems should be found wearing the Christian emblem. But it is really a case of sympathetic magic. The evil spirits are conceived as being of Christian origin and therefore unwilling to approach anyone protected by Christian symbols. Miss Blackman, *op. cit.*, p. 65, has apparently overlooked this explanation. The old story of St. Dunstan driving away the Devil by means of a horse's shoe, the devil's own emblem is a similar case. I am indebted to Miss A. Gibson, M.A., formerly headmistress of the Scottish School for Girls in Alexandria, Egypt, for this reference. We still use horse shoes for good luck without thinking of their long folk-history. For the prophylactic value of the cross among Moslems reference may be made to F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, I. pp. 30–31. Tr.]

[2] [For examples of tattooing amongst certain Egyptian lower-class types, see article in the *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte*, vol. V. (1923). Willmore, *Spoken Arabic of Egypt*, pp. 364–5 gives some tattooing superstitions. See also Dr. Fouquet: *Le tatouage médical en Égypte dans l'antiquité et à l'époque actuelle* (*Archives d'Anthropologie criminelle*), Lyon xiii, 1899, p. 270 ff. Tr.]

5:Blackman E-5 (1923)1926 MR13 Fellahin MR13

[713] [716] hanging it round its neck till it is seven years old, after which period it will be immune.

[751] [843] The *ḳarînch* seen by King David was the queen of them all, and the promise she gave is binding on all her subjects. She herself is not, according to my informant, the "double" of any human being; she is by herself, and, like the king of the *afrīts*, lives for ever.

[304] [751] [761] If a woman's children have died one after the other, soon after they were born, when another one arrives she has it tattooed with a small round spot in the centre of the forehead, while a similar spot is tattooed on the left ankle. After this she believes that her *ḳarînch* will not attempt to touch her child.

Apparently, during the notable interview between King David and the queen of the *ḳarînchs* the latter promised him that if a child bore these marks she would not touch him or her.

[716] [753] A *ḳarînch* may do good or evil to a mother's children till they have passed the age of seven years. She only does harm, so I was told, if the mother has been doing something wrong. For instance, if the *ḳarînch* clutches a child by the throat, it means that the child's mother has been ill-tempered, and so on.

A man's *ḳarîn* does not affect his children, it only affects him. If he should lose his temper with his wife or family, or with his friends, or does wrong in any way, and goes to bed unrepentant, he may wake up in the morning and find that some illness has attacked him. This has been caused by his *ḳarîn*. When he is sorry and expressed [755] repentance, or has called in a magician, who will give him a charm to wear under his left arm, he will be cured.

[716] [753] [755] [778] If a child seems sickly and gets thinner and weaker every day, the mother knows that her *ḳarînch* is trying to draw her child away from her. Various devices are resorted to in order to mitigate this evil. Near a small village in Asyūṭ Province there is a large stone which is called the stone of the Sheikha Fāṭimeh, who is believed to be buried here. If a child is being drawn away by its mother's *ḳarînch*, the mother will take it on a Friday to this stone, near which she will place the child, and she herself [787] will stay to watch over it. If the child goes to sleep quietly the mother knows that it will recover, but if it cries and refuses to sleep she takes it home again, knowing full well that it will shortly die. I have myself seen a child lying near the stone fast asleep, with its mother sitting close by. (Pl. XIV, Fig. 1.)

In a village in Middle Egypt there is an old disused graveyard, crowned by the domed tomb of a celebrated local sheikh. The other graves are now fallen into ruin, and many of them show large, gaping hollows. (Pl. XIV, Fig. 2.) A woman whose child is affected by her *ḳarînch* will take it and place it in one of these cavities, the results being the same as in the case of the stone of the Sheikha Fāṭimeh.

[755] A child may suffer from a cough, accompanied by gasping, as if it could hardly breathe. It is liable to such an attack at any time till it has passed the age of seven years. To cure it, the mother or grandmother (either paternal or maternal), or a

[See Category 116, Plate facing p. 168--Analyst]

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

39.

The New Railway.

539x 496 [788] [103] [131]

A girl, named Dināre wishes to go to Ṭanṭa, to the tomb of Shēkh Aḥmed. (Compare No. 8—9.) At the time of the origin of this little song, the railroad from Cairo to Alexandria had probably just been built. (It was opened in 1856.) Ṭanṭa lies in the province of Ḳarbîye, about fifty-four miles from Cairo, on the railroad between Cairo and Alexandria; the capital of the province of Beḥêre, Damanhûr, lies on the same railroad, still nearer to Alexandria, something over thirty-six miles from Ṭanṭa.

Dināre 'âlet: Yamma,
ana rāiḥe-s-Seiyid azūr,
warūḥ balad el-Beḥēre
watfarrag 'al-bagūr.

Dināre said: "Mother,
I am going to visit the Seiyid
And going to Beḥēre
To look at the railway".

Circumcision.

40. 41.

539x 852 304

Most boys are circumcised when six or seven years old, and the day is always celebrated by some festivity, at which the boy is decked out and led through the streets.

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

40.

×539 The father hurries home to the festivity.
● 304
852

'Aldīni, ya-m'addāwi!
an-arauwaḥ baladi
warauwaḥ bis-salāme
waṭāhir waladi.

Ferry me over, ferryman!
I wish to go to my village
And go safely,
And have my son circumcised.

[113] J. H. Churi, in Sea Nile the Desert etc. London 1853, p. 309 (reprinted by Baecher, Arbeit und Rhythmus, p. 429) gives this song with a melody. The first two verses are also to be found in a song of Egyptian origin, which was dictated to Dalman (p. 141) by a sailor in Sidon.

41.

[301] [292] The women are decking out the boy for the procession, with a necklace and a ṭarbṭsh (compare No. 24). The mother speaks:

El-'o'd 'o'di, wan-aldumo be-hawāye!
Gibt eṭ-ṭarābīš, labbasû-li ḥadāye,
we-'adāit ummo rāide ḥaṭṭāye!

The necklace is my necklace, and I shall string it as I please!
I have brought the ṭarbûsh, dress him (the boy) here before me,
(So smartly) that the enemy of his mother will be sick (from envy)!

[114] 3. This is Maḥmûd's interpretation, but it may be that he is wrong in this interpretation, which demands rāqide instead of rāide.

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

64.

Dreams of the Future.

539x
304●
858

For explanation of the manner of address compare with the preceding song. Here prosperity is wished the little one, and a fine tatooing — the pride of a pretty girl — is promised her. Girls are usually tatooed at the age of five or six.

In the country almost all the women are tatooed; most frequently on the front part of the chin and on the lip, but also on the forehead, breast, backs of the hands and on the feet. The designs are pricked in with needles and blue or green coloring matter rubbed in. Compare Nos. 114 and 126.

Alla yeʿ̄nik, ya uzēz el-Yaman!
win ʾamet el-wizze we-ʾamet saʿdīha,
ladu" lil-wizze ʿala kaʿbīha.

Allah help thee, gosling of Yemen!
And when the goose has grown up and her fortune has grown too,
Then I will tatoo the goose upon her wrists and ankles.

1. Yemen = Arabia Felix, Araby the Blest.

2. Upon Maḥmûd's explanation of ʾamet saʿdīha I was strongly reminded of: "advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men". Added to this were riches of course.

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

114.

×539 832 Two people conversing. Ll. 1—2 are the words of the man; ll. 3—5 are spoken by the woman.

Yabu-l-libās el-ʾaṭīfe
we-dikketo halahalla!
Gibt en-nabāil, ya sīdi,
wed-da" laḥḍar ʿala īdi!
Ya Moslimīn waḥḥadu Alla!

[292] "Thou with the velvet trowsers
The lacings of which are so fine!"
[301] "I have put on the bracelets, sir,
[304] And the green tatooing is on my hand!
[779] Ye Moslems, testify to the oneness of Allah!"

4. Regarding the tatooing of the hands compare the remark on No. 64. l. 3.

5. The Egyptian sees nothing improper in combining pious expressions with most questionable matters.

115.

Taʿalâ-li, ya wad, taʿalâ-li,
taḥtĕ sagaret yūḥ, ya ɣazali!

Come to me, my lad, O, come to me
Under the tree of delight, O my gazelle!

[192] 2. For "delight", the Arabic has a characteristic exclamation of pleasure (yūḥ!).

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

126.

Recognized.

x 539 832 A girl wishes to ingratiate herself with a certain well-to-do young man (ll. 1—2). He repels her, saying that she bears the name of her other lover plainly upon her lips.

Massik bil-ḫēr, ya-Mḥammed mela'ini,
rakib kuḥēle u-rah el-kummē sittīnī.
Dā'i'a 'ala šiffetak ḥandar
u-'Osmān Bē! 'Iš' el-banāt ṣandara!
Ya rabb, neggīni.

"Good evening, Mohammed, who meetest me
Riding a noble mare, and trailing the sleeve yards long."
"[O be gone!] Tatooed in green on thy lips is
The name Osman Bê! — — How fickle are girls when in love!
O Lord, save me [from all danger]!"

2. The last words mean literally: trailing the sleeve sixty (yards) long, a great exaggeration.

3. Literally: "Thou hast green color tatooed and the name etc." Regarding tatooing see No. 64. Girls often have the name of a lover tatooed upon themselves. Compare a song from Endor in Galilee, in Dalman's collection, p. 112. "... the hands a work of the Creator and the blue tatooing over them strewn. On her breast she writes Ḥ and M and D." (These letters stand for Ḥ(a)m(a)d, the name of the lover.)

5. This exclamation has no connection with what precedes, as it would seem from the English. It is one of the innumerable, ejaculatory prayers, which Moslems enjoy repeating.

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

They also clap their hands, beat the kettle-drums, make gestures and movements of all kinds, wag their heads about, jump, stoop down, but do not move from the spot. At the same time female forms, completely veiled and enveloped in an outer robe, enter the circle and dance, but in their dancing also there is no violent galloping about, nor even hopping, but they move with varying paces, run sideways, backwards and forwards, wriggle, bend, and turn round slowly. The pantomimic motions are made with their hands, their faces not being available for the purpose. The row of singers appears especially to take pleasure in the movements of the dancers, catching up all their bendings and gestures, and repeating them. One woman steps into the circle while another vanishes, or several dance together at the same time, but never in harmony with each other. A spectator now passes through the circle, hurries up to one of the dancers, who has particularly pleased him, and twines a handkerchief round her, in which he has knotted several coins. The more actively and coquettishly the veiled damsel dances, the more admirers she gains, and she may leave the scene hung with handkerchiefs. After some time the unfolded and emptied handkerchief is unexpectedly flung to its owner by the lady, who again appears on the scene, and who has been able to find out, even in the darkness of night, who it was that decorated her and made her the present.

On this occasion a dance which has a half warlike character is also executed specially for the men. The dancer is armed with a sword or a long cudgel, which, hopping and springing, bending and wheeling, he swings as gracefully as possible, with pantomimic and gently threatening movements towards the spectators. Or perhaps two dancers enter the circle, and with similar movements engage in mock combat.

CIRCUMCISION.

On the evening before the great day of Circumcision, the "night of the henna," the women assemble. The henna leaves are kneaded into a dough or paste, which is set in

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
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pieces on a tray, a taper being stuck on every piece. The women move through the house in procession to an accompaniment of singing, trilling, and kettle-drum playing, the boy who is the occasion of the festival behind the henna tray. The mother and the singing-girls receive presents, the boy has a piece of the henna-paste tied into the hollow of his hand, the assembled women do the same for themselves, and all awake next morning with brownish-red palms.

On the day of the circumcision itself, the boy, who is now five to ten years old, is dressed in a new and costly garment, a Cashmere shawl, or it may be a woman's robe (perhaps as a sign that up to this time he has belonged to the harem), a gold-embroidered woman's cap is placed on his head, he is mounted on a horse, and rides in grand procession accompanied by musical instruments round the town. In the evening there is great feasting in his parent's house. Next morning, or on the evening after the procession, the barber performs the circumcision with a razor, an operation customary even among the ancient Egyptians. By it the boy becomes clean, and capable of performing religious exercises, of praying and entering the mosque; this religious act is, therefore, in some respects analogous to the Christian rite of confirmation.

The circumcision of girls is performed privately, and may be guessed to have taken place when, on a customary day, girls in red holiday-clothes swarm about on the streets.

MARRIAGE.

As in the case of circumcision, the preparations for a marriage, in the shape of domestic entertainments and ceremonies, commence months before. As soon as a son exhibits the first signs of puberty his parents think of providing him with a wife. In opposition to the views of other peoples these marriages of children are considered very healthy and judicious throughout the East, even among the Christians. The parents justly believe that they thus provide for the well-being of their children. Long before puberty, which follows in their twelfth or fourteenth year, or still earlier, all the girls are given